

RECOVERY REVIEW

NEW BEGINNINGS: BLACK BEAR CUBS BOND DURING REHABILITATION JOURNEY

by Katie Grant



Black bear 24-438 during intake exam.

Black bear cubs rely heavily on their mother for survival during their early months. On June 7, 2024, Fish & Wildlife brought black bear 24-438 to AIWC after finding her alone in Bragg Creek. Upon arrival, she had a high parasite load that caused gastrointestinal upset, but thankfully, Lactaid was able to ease her stomach. After several weeks in care, she was doing well, and on June 26, was moved into a larger, outdoor enclosure. Just a few days later, she was introduced to the other cub (black bear 24-192) in our care, and eventually moved to the brand new Bear Den enclosure. The two cubs now spend their nights cuddling in their den as they continue to pack on the pounds in preparation for release into the wild this coming fall.

While in our care, the cubs are learning skills necessary for survival in their natural habitat, such as foraging for food and avoiding human contact. If you have reason to believe that a bear cub you encounter is orphaned, it is best to call AIWC or your local Fish &

Wildlife office, so they can monitor the situation and determine if the cub needs help. Every bear that has been brought into the care of AIWC has been successfully released back into the wild.



Black bear 24-428 in first outdoor enclosure.



Black bear 24-438 chasing a butterfly



Black bear 24-438 in the new Bear Den enclosure for the first time



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MISSION:

AIWC is committed to the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife. We provide expert advice and education that fosters an appreciation of wildlife.

OUR VISION:

Preserving the legacy of wildlife.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

This summer has been one of the most diverse on record at AIWC. Though patient numbers are slightly down from last year, we have admitted a higher than usual number of species this summer. In particular, we are caring for many different kinds of high-needs mammal patients, including two bear cubs, seven fox kits, a baby beaver, over 40 skunk kits, and even a bobcat kitten! We have also admitted over 300 ducks in 2024, most of whom are ducklings requiring intensive care and specialized pools during their stay with us.

Having so many different species has stretched our enclosure capacity to the limit, as many of these animals have similar housing needs. With the completion of the new bear den (see the story on page 3) and some generous donations from supporters to help us retrofit an older enclosure to be suitable for the bobcat, we have finally been able to move things around so that everyone has the ideal space to grow, play, and develop their skills before release.

While summer brings challenges aplenty for rehabilitation centres like AIWC, it is important for us to celebrate the many good memories as well. This year, we are happy to invite anyone living in or visiting the Calgary area on Saturday, September 14th to an in-person end-of-summer trivia event! Paired with a small online silent auction, this event will celebrate some of AIWC's notable achievements this summer, and be a great opportunity to have fun, chat with AIWC staff, and meet some of your fellow supporters. See the insert or our website events page (<https://bit.ly/3Wi5Xe2>) for more information.

A huge thank you to you all for your support of AIWC's mission. We are incredibly grateful for all you do to help Alberta's injured and orphaned wildlife - it is thanks to you that we are able to achieve so much, and ensure these animals get the care they need. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Katrina Terrill
Acting Executive Director



Photo by Denise Cresswell



NEW BEAR DEN ENCLOSURE COMPLETED

by Raelee Barth, Clinic Operations Manager

Bear cubs climbing enrichment in new enclosure.



This month we completed construction on and moved our first two patients to the new Bear Den enclosure! One of the biggest changes with this space over the previous enclosure is an indoor building designed specifically for our bear cubs. In the past, young bear patients not old enough to go outside would be raised in a room in the basement of our clinic. This is not ideal, as no matter how hard we try, there will always be human voices and noises in the clinic. Not only does this cause unnecessary stress in our bear cubs but it can also habituate them to humans if we aren't careful.

The new building will be used exclusively for our bear cubs, and only their specific caregivers will enter, limiting bear stressors and the chance of habituation. The new enclosure also has three separate care stages, a small indoor space, small outdoor

space, and finally a large outdoor enclosure. The cubs will be able to advance through these stages as they grow and become more independent.

The most exciting part about the design is that all three stages are connected by a series of gates that caregivers can operate from outside the enclosure. This allows cubs to be shifted from one stage to the next without having to be caught by our caregivers, lowering bear stress and drastically improving the safety for our team. Our staff has previously always had to enter into the enclosure with the bears to feed or move them, but now we can simply close a gate and go in and work on one side, then open in to shift them over once we are done. The combination of all these additions will lower the time the bear cubs spend around people, making the rehabilitation process safer for both them and our staff.

We'd like to give a special thank-you to Inter Pipeline and the estate of William D. Tidball for sponsoring the construction of the Bear Den.

Bear Den climbing enrichment



Inter Pipeline volunteers during construction



AMERICAN RED SQUIRREL 24-126

by Carley Goodreau

A young American red squirrel was found by a dog and owner in late April. He was alone on the ground, with no parent to be found and weighing only 54 grams upon intake – that’s approximately the size of a golf ball! He was initially brought to Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society on April 26, 2024, and transferred to AIWC on April 30th. Red squirrels are native to Alberta, unlike the larger grey squirrel, which has been introduced to the area.

The squirrel was approximately five weeks-old when he was found. He spent two weeks indoors on a formula diet and started weaning off formula on May 12. When he was able to forage for his own food, he was moved to an outdoor enclosure. This speedy squirrel adapted quickly to the outdoors, becoming an agile climber in the next few days. With his newly developed climbing skills, the squirrel was ready to leave the clinic and was released on June 1, weighing 125 grams.

American red squirrel formula feeding in care



Photo by Denise Cresswell

WHAT A HEAD-TURNER!

by Heike Lippmann

The great grey owl is the tallest owl in the northern hemisphere, living mostly in bogs, meadows, and coniferous forests, feeding mainly off of small rodents. However, they only weigh a small amount, as much of their body is made up of a thick coat of feathers.

Great grey owl patient 24-267 came to us on May 23, 2024 after being hit by a car. She was probably hunting when she suffered head trauma and some broken tail feathers, but was otherwise in good shape. After resting, she was prepared for her release inside our flight pen enclosure. After only a couple of days she had six of her tail feathers impinged. This is a feather replacement technique, where a donor feather is joined to the shaft of a broken feather. The repaired feather will subsequently moult out as normal and a new feather will grow to replace it.

On May 31, she was released, which makes her the third ever successfully rehabilitated and released great grey owl from our institute. HOO-ray!



Great grey owl undergoing imping procedure



Great grey owl moments after being released to the wild



BEAR NECESSITIES UPDATE

by Julia Gaume



Black bear 23-1624 on climbing enrichment

For our dedicated ‘Recovery Review’ readers, black bear 23-1624 from Westlock AB is probably quite familiar. For those of you who aren’t aware, a black bear cub came into our care after he was found searching for food in Westlock AB on October 31, 2023. When he arrived at our facility, he was extremely emaciated, weighing in at only 13 kilograms. With a cub this young and significantly underweight, immediate release wasn’t an option. For 230 days, our dedicated staff cared for and assisted him on his rehabilitation journey. In our last update, the bear weighed in at a lofty 32.5 kilograms, and while he was quickly improving, he still had a way to go before release.

He hibernated from January - March, and when he woke up, he quickly went back to eating a full and healthy diet. At his pre-release exam, he weighed in at 60.7 kilograms, almost 5 times his starting weight! At this point, he was deemed a successful candidate for release — he passed his physical exam and showed no signs of habituation to humans. On June 19, 2024, this black bear was successfully released back to the wild!

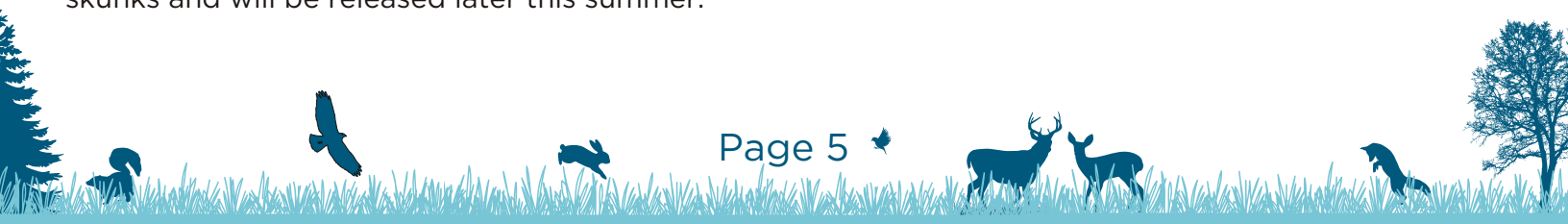
Thank-you to our amazing clinic staff and everyone who followed along, donated, and supported this black bear during his rehabilitation journey. We couldn’t have done this without you!

STRIPED SKUNKS SUCCESS STORY

By Courtney Collins

AIWC received a group of nine baby skunks, known as kits, after their mother was relocated, leaving the babies orphaned. The kits were approximately three weeks-old when they arrived over the course of two days of trapping in early June.

Skunks are weaned at around 8 weeks of age and this group of kits would have been unable to survive alone. Luckily, none of the babies had any injuries. Each of the skunks were treated with subcutaneous fluids for rehydration and were then formula-fed from a dish four times daily. While being formula-fed, the skunks were already engaging in threat displays that included stomping and tail raising – a great sign! The kits have now officially been moved into an outdoor pre-release enclosure with older skunks and will be released later this summer.



Beaver kit swimming while in care



ORPHAN NORTH AMERICAN BEAVER TAKES AIWC BY STORM!

by Vivian Hindbo

This North American beaver kit had a rough start to life. She was rescued and taken to WILDNorth on May 29, 2024 after being rejected and pushed out of the lodge by her parents. Wild animals will reject babies to protect the other babies in a litter, whether from disease or to ensure enough resources are available. Based on her weight and behavior, we suspect this kit may have been the runt of the litter.

She was transferred her to us on May 30 at approximately one week-old. She quickly took to swimming and, after a few days, she started diving and biting browse. Initially, she was a very fussy and vocal eater; she would willingly suckle formula from a syringe, but only for short periods. She's now consistently eating solids and starting to reject formula feeds (self-weaning). Down to about two formula feeds a day, she'll be fully weaned by the beginning of August.

Because young beavers remain with their parents for two to three years, this beaver patient will need to remain in our care until the spring of 2026. Until then, she will be provided with a naturalistic environment and all the care she needs to become ready for life in the wild.



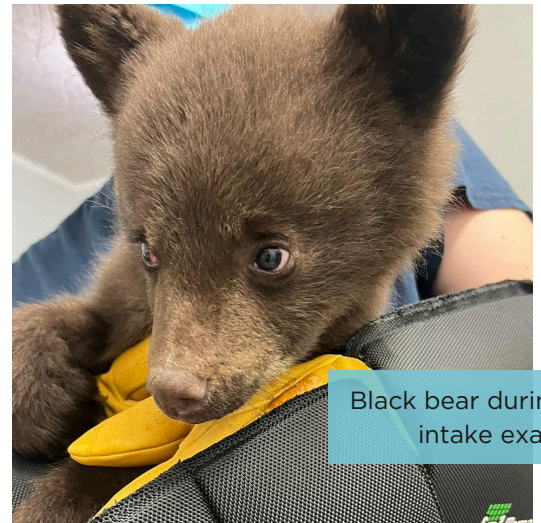
Beaver kit feeding on rodent block

HUNGRY AS A BEAR

by Bonnie Weiss

In May of this year, black bear 24-192 was found wandering alone along a roadside near Rocky Mountain House. She arrived at AIWC on May 14, 2024 with some significant concerns. She was emaciated, dehydrated and displayed signs of head trauma. The cub began to have seizures shortly after entering care; but with regular treatment, steady improvement occurred, leading to her being moved to an outdoor enclosure, away from as much human contact as possible. At that point, she was climbing and her weight had tripled.

She, and the other cub currently in care (black bear 24-438), are the first AIWC patients to occupy the new Bear Den enclosure – a special occasion for AIWC and her! She is set to be released back into her natural environment in October of this year.



Black bear during intake exam

EGGS IN TIFFANY BLUE, IT'S TRUE!

By Courtney Bogstie

Known for those famously teal-coloured eggs, the American robin is one of the most familiar and widespread songbird species in North America.

On May 18, 2024, four American robin hatchlings were taken to AIWC after they were discovered in a motor home that was driven away from its original location (away from their parents). Due to their young age and fragile condition, despite round the clock care, only two hatchlings were strong enough to continue to grow and improve. The two siblings (now considered fledglings) continued to grow and were moved to an outdoor enclosure. Now fully independent and considered mature enough to succeed on their own, these strong survivors were released June 20. If you're a gardener keep an eye out as tamer robins have been known to follow behind during digging to grab an easy snack!

Photo by Denise Cresswell



American robin fledgling gaping for food



Red fox kits in outdoor enclosure

Photo by Denise Cresswell

THE SERENDIPITOUS SEVEN

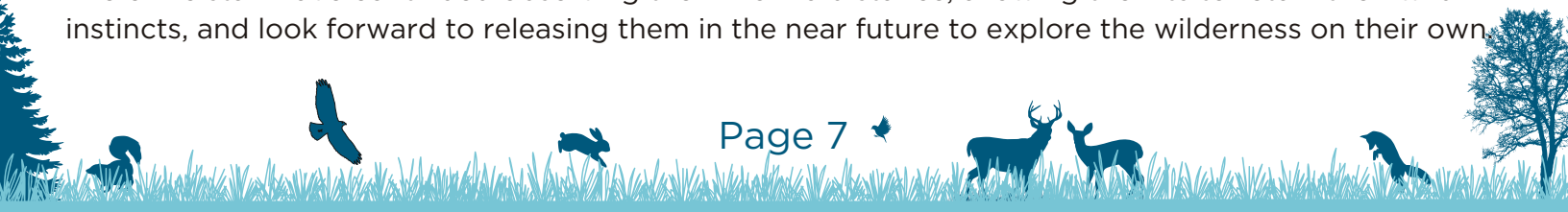
by Roxanne Selkirk

Whether or not you believe in luck, there is no denying that the number seven plays an important role in our world. There are seven wonders of the world, seven days in a week, seven colours in a rainbow, seven notes on a musical scale, and it is the most widely revered 'lucky' number.

Before we get to seven, we first need to start with one. One lone red fox kit was admitted to our clinic this spring and began a solo journey to recovery. Then came the number five. Five orphaned fox kits were found in Del Bonita in early May and brought to our clinic. Five days later, a sixth fox kit belonging to litter of five was admitted. Finally, having reached lucky number seven, all our fox kits were able to be introduced to each other and continue their rehabilitation journey as a septuple.

Upon being admitted, the fox kits received flea baths and were started on formula. By the end of May, they moved to an outdoor enclosure, and are behaving as wild foxes should, playing with each other and remaining weary of our clinic staff.

Despite their cute and cuddly appearance, our staff have used their willpower to resist getting too close and personal. To ensure their successful return to the wild, human contact is kept to a minimum. The clinic staff have continued observing them from a distance, allowing the kits to retain their wild instincts, and look forward to releasing them in the near future to explore the wilderness on their own.



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By purchasing an annual membership, you support local wildlife, conservation, and education at AIWC for a yearly fee of \$35 per person or \$45 for a family.

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- Our emailed E-news
- Discounted prices on select AIWC merchandise
- The opportunity to participate in the AIWC Annual General Meeting

There are three easy ways to purchase or renew your membership:

- Complete and mail in the membership section of the insert attached
- Complete the secure online form at aiwc.ca
- Call 403-946-2361

AIWC plans to raise \$1,100,000 this year through fundraising campaigns and initiatives. It will cost the organization approximately \$65,000 to raise this amount. Funds raised will go to support AIWC's mission. For further information, please contact Katrina Terrill at 403-946-2361.

Charitable #: 14041 6140 RR0001

ALBERTA WILDLIFE INSIDER CONTINUES

by Scottie Potter, Communications Coordinator

Two new installments of our educational video series, *Alberta Wildlife Insider*, have been released since the last issue. The most recent episode focuses on the care of some of Alberta's most at-risk animals - bats! The long-lifespans and slow birthrates of these flying mammals mean every individual bat that comes through our clinic is vital to the continuation of their species.

Learn all about what it's like to rehabilitate and release these noble nocturnal neighbours by watching the episode on our YouTube channel!



To watch all episodes of *Alberta Wildlife Insider* head to www.youtube.com/@alberta_wildlife

Or scan the QR code here:



AIWC Hours

Our clinic is open to admit patients and accept donations/supplies at these times:

May to August: 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

September to April: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

(With modified hours on select holidays)

Please call our Wildlife Hotline at **403-946-2361** before dropping off an injured or orphaned animal.

For after hours assistance please refer to our website:

www.aiwc.ca/found-a-wild-animal/after-hours-assistance/

